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## **ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST**

### **PART I. PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION**

**1. Project Title:** Hellgate Civilian Shooters Association

**2. Type of Proposed Action:**

The Hellgate Civilian Shooters Association proposes to:

- Maintain over one mile of range access road.
- Upgrade, maintain, and gravel the parking lots and nine separate ranges.

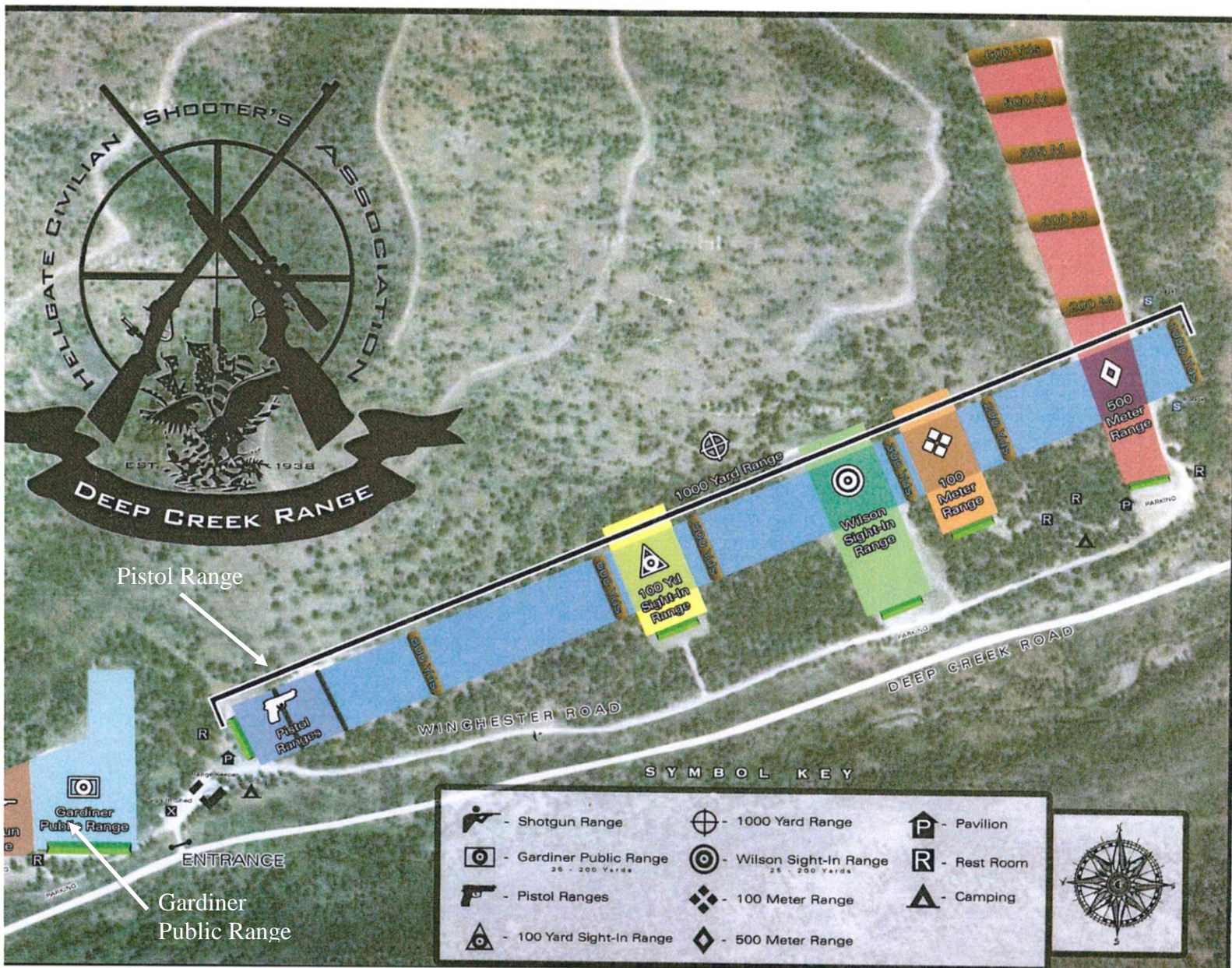
**3. Location Affected by Proposed Action:**

The Hellgate Civilian Shooters Association (HCSA) Deep Creek Range is located on 100 acres state land leased from Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP), approximately, 7 miles northwest of Missoula, Montana at 17770 Deep Creek Road, Missoula, Montana 59804, Lat. 46.92581, Long. -114.24721, Section 34 Township 14 North, Range 21 West.



**Map 1 - Aerial Photo of the Hellgate Civilian Shooters Association Deep Creek Range.**





**Map2. Facilities Map for Hellgate Civilian Shooters Association Deep Creek Range.**

**4. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action:** MCA 87-1-276 through 87-1-279 (Legislative established policies and procedures for the establishment and improvement of shooting ranges) and MCA 87-2-105 (Departmental authority to expend funds to provide training in the safe handling and use of firearms and safe hunting practices). The Montana Legislature has authorized funding for the establishment of a Shooting Range Development Program providing financial assistance for the development of shooting ranges. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) has responsibility for the administration of the program, including the necessary guidelines and procedures governing applications for funding assistance under the program.

To be eligible for grant assistance, a private shooting club or a private organization:

(a)(i) *Shall accept in its membership any person who holds or is eligible to hold a Montana hunting license*

*and who pays club or organization membership fees;*

*(ii) May not limit the number of members;*

*(iii) may charge a membership fee not greater than the per-member share of the club's or organization's reasonable cost of provision of services, including establishment, improvement, and maintenance of shooting facilities and other membership services; and*

*(iv) shall offer members occasional guest privileges at no cost to the member or invited guest and shall make a reasonable effort to hold a public sight-in day each September, when the general public may use the shooting range for a day-use fee or at no cost; or*

*(b) Shall admit the general public for a reasonable day-use fee.*

## **5. Need for the Action(s):**

The Deep Creek Range roads and parking areas are in dire need of repair. They do not drain water properly creating continual potholes and erosion. In addition, in some areas the roads are not wide enough for two vehicles to pass safely, causing one vehicle to pull off the roadway, contributing to additional road erosion.

## **6. Objectives for the Action(s):**

The objectives of the proposed project are to upgrade, maintain, and gravel the roads and parking areas on the Deep Creek Range and to improve and maintain access to the handicap facilities.

## **7. Project Size: estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected:**

The Hellgate Civilian Shooters Association Deep Creek Range is located on 100 acres. The proposed improvements will cover a small portion of the 20-acre area that the parking area, campground, and 500-meter range cover.

## **8. Affected Environment (A brief description of the affected area of the proposed project):**

The Deep Creek Range is located on 100 acres of land owned by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. The HCSEA entered into a 10-year lease agreement with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks in 2017, which is due to expire in 2027. There are no permanent surface waters or wetlands on the property. The Deep Creek Range offers opportunities for several shooting sports, including cowboy action shooting, rifle silhouette, small-bore and center-fire rifle, Schutzen rifle, 1000-yard bench-rest rifle, Black Powder cartridge silhouette rifle, Black Powder cartridge long-range prone rifle, and high-power rifle.

## **9. Description of Project:**

Maintain over one mile of the access road and upgrade and maintain the parking areas on nine separate ranges. Water will be hauled in to soak these roads and parking areas prior to grading. Once grading has been completed, road material will be screened on site, and applied to the range roads and parking lots.

▪ Road and Parking Lot Maintenance and Improvement	\$ 24,995
▪ Grant Application and Management	\$ 227
▪ Total Project Budget	\$ 25,222
▪ Total Funding Requested from FWP	\$ 12,611

## **10. List any Other Local, State, or Federal Agency that has Overlapping or Additional Jurisdiction:**

None

## **Permits, Licenses and/or Authorizations:**



<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permit</u>	<u>Date Filed/#</u>
N/A		

**Funding:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	\$12,611

**11. Affiliations, Cooperating Agencies, User Groups and/or Supporting Groups:**

The Hellgate Civilian Shooters Association Deep Creek Range is a private range for the use of paying members. Membership fees are \$40 for an individual and \$40 for a family. Visitors can shoot for a day use fee of \$5.

Organizations that have used the range in the past include: Missoula County Sheriff's Department, Boy Scouts, Montana Highway Patrol, Army Reserve, Montana National Guard, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Missoula Police Department, and U.S. Forest Service. In addition, the range is always open for Hunter Safety Classes.

**12. History of the Planning and Scoping Process, and Any Public Involvement:**

Because the HCSA Deep Creek Range is a private nonprofit shooting range for members, there has been no public involvement in the planning process. Proposed range improvement proposals have been discussed with the club members and the associated project vendors and contractors.

**13. List of Agencies Consulted/Contacted During Preparation of the EA:**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

**14. Names, Address, and Phone Number of Project Sponsor:**

Richard Houldson, 2331 S. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street W, Missoula, MT 59801, (406) 327-9980.

**15. Other Pertinent Information:**

The HCSA is a nonprofit private shooting club. The Deep Creek Range provides a variety of rifle shooting facilities. The closest range offering cowboy action shooting is located 99 miles from the Deep Creek Range in Big Fork, MT. The closest high-power rifle and center-fire silhouette rifle is 110 miles from the range in Rocker, MT. The closest small-bore silhouette rifle range is 147 miles away in Townsend, MT and the closest 100-yard range is 315 miles away in Rexford, ID.

Shooting range applications require the participating governing body to approve by resolution its submission of applications for shooting range-funding assistance. Resolution Date: January 10, 2017.

**PART II. IDENTIFICATION OF THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVES**

**Alternative A, the Proposed Alternative, and Alternative B, the No Action Alternative,** were considered.

- **Alternative A (Proposed Alternative)** is as described in Part I, paragraph 9 (Description of Project): to maintain and improve the access road and parking areas at the Deep Creek Range. There are beneficial consequences to acceptance of the **Proposed Alternative**.
- **Alternative B (No Action Alternative)** Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Shooting Range Development Grant money would be denied and the area will remain as an active shooting range without the proposed improvements. The no action alternative would have no significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences. The range will continue on with present

conditions. Land use would remain the same.

**Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:** Only the proposed alternative and the no action alternative were considered. There were no other alternatives that were deemed reasonably available, nor prudent. Neither the proposed alternative nor the no action alternative would have significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences.

**Describe any Alternatives considered and eliminated from Detailed Study:**

None. Only the proposed alternative and the no action alternative were considered. There was no other alternative that were deemed reasonably available, or prudent. Neither the **Proposed Alternative** nor the **No Action Alternative** would have significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences.

**List and explain proposed mitigating measures (stipulations):** None

**PART III. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

Abbreviated Checklist – The degree and intensity determines extent of Environmental Review. An abbreviated checklist may be used for those projects that are not complex, controversial, or are not in environmentally sensitive areas.

**Table 1. Potential impact on physical environment.**

<b>Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:</b>	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Can Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comments Below</b>
1. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources				<b>X</b>		
2. Terrestrial or aquatic life and/or habitats				<b>X</b>		<b>2</b>
3. Introduction of new species into an area				<b>X</b>		
4. Vegetation cover, quantity & quality				<b>X</b>		<b>4</b>
5. Water quality, quantity & distribution (surface or groundwater)				<b>X</b>		<b>5</b>
6. Existing water right or reservation				<b>X</b>		
7. Geology & soil quality, stability & moisture				<b>X</b>		
8. Air quality or objectionable odors				<b>X</b>		<b>8</b>
9. Historical & archaeological sites				<b>X</b>		<b>9</b>
10. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy				<b>X</b>		

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
11. Aesthetics				X		

**2. & 5.** There are no delineated wetlands and no natural water sources within the area proposed for development. No critical wildlife habitat would be affected. Any resident or transient wildlife may leave the immediate area during road re-surfacing activity.

**4.** Because the project only involves the maintenance and improvement of existing roads and parking areas, no vegetation would be affected by the proposed project.

**8.** Minor and temporary dust and vehicle emissions would be created by construction equipment during improvement and maintenance of the access road and parking areas. However, the construction time is short and human effects will be limited due to the sparse population in the surrounding area.

**9.** This project uses no federal funds nor does it take place on state owned or controlled property; therefore, the Federal 106 Regulations and the State Antiques Act do not apply.

**Table 2. Potential impacts on human environment.**

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
1. Social structures and cultural diversity				X		
2. Changes in existing public benefits provided by wildlife populations and/or habitat				X		
3. Local and state tax base and tax revenue				X		
4. Agricultural production				X		
5. Human health				X		5
6. Quantity & distribution of community & personal income				X		
7. Access to & quality of recreational activities				X		7

8. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals (ordinances)				X		
9. Distribution & density of population and housing				X		
10. Demands for government services				X		
11. Industrial and/or commercial activity				X		

5. The proposed improvement and maintenance of the access road and parking areas would improve access to handicap-accessible facilities and the safety and sanitation for members and the public using the range.

7. The proposed improvements to the HCSA Deep Creek Range will improve the quality of the shooting sports within the community.

#### **PART IV. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT**

All of the pertinent or potential impacts of the project have been reviewed, discussed, and analyzed. None of the project reviewed were complex, controversial, or located in an environmentally sensitive area. The projects being implemented are already on an existing range/altere areas that together with the insignificant environmental effects of the proposed action, indicates that this should be considered the final version of the environmental assessment. There are no significant environmental or economic impacts associated with the proposed alternative.

The HCSA proposed alternative, to provide a safe, regulated shooting opportunity, is supported by its members and the public. Therefore, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks should approve the proposed alternative (A) for the improvements as outlined in Part I, Paragraph 9.

#### **PART V. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**

**Does the proposed action involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely harmful if they were to occur?** No

**Does the proposed action have impacts that are individually minor, but cumulatively significant or potentially significant?** Individually, the proposed actions may have minor, temporary impacts. However, it was determined that there are no significant or potentially significant cumulatively impacts. Cumulative impacts have been assessed considering any incremental impact of the proposed action when they are combined with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, and no significant impacts or substantially controversial issues were found. There are no extreme hazards created with this project and there are no conflicts with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan.

#### **Recommendation and justification concerning preparation of EIS:**

There are no significant environmental or economic impacts associated with the proposed alternative; therefore, an EIS is not required.

## **PART VI. EA CONCLUSION SECTION**

### **Individuals or groups contributing to, or commenting on, this EA:**

- Richard Houldson, 2331 S. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street W, Missoula, MT 59801, (406) 327-9980.
- MT Fish Wildlife and Parks

### **EA prepared by:**

Andrea Darling, Darling Natural Resource Consulting, Montana City, MT 59634

### **Date Completed:**

May 24, 2017

### **Describe public involvement, if any:**

This draft EA will be advertised on FWP's web site and through a legal ad in the *Missoulian*, *Missoula, MT* announcing a public comment period. A press release will also announce the project and comment period.